

## SEEKING EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

### A WORD ABOUT ETHICS

**Are there any rules barring me from looking for a job or limiting who I can contact about a future job?**

- No. You are free to look for a job at anytime with anyone.

**Are there any restrictions on me because I am in a job search?**

- Yes. Once you start to look for non-Federal employment you must stop working on anything that will affect a prospective employer—meaning anyone you have contacted, or who has contacted you, about a job.

**When does this disqualification requirement begin?**

- Disqualification begins as soon as:
  - you contact the prospective employer about a possible job, such as by sending a résumé;
  - a prospective employer contacts you about a possible job; or
  - you learn from a headhunter or other agent about a contact with the prospective employer on your behalf.

**When does the disqualification end?**

- Disqualification ends when:
  - either you or the prospective employer notifies the other of the end of employment discussions or
  - two months have elapsed without response after you sent an application.

**Do I need to notify my supervisor or anyone else about a job search?**

- Yes, in some cases. You must provide notice of employment contacts:
  - to an ethics official within 3 days of any communication with a prospective employer, in writing with a disqualification notice, if you are an SES member, political appointee, or otherwise required to file a public financial disclosure report (OGE Form 278), in which case you can use the Notice of Employment Negotiations form found on the Ethics Law and Programs Division webpage at [www.commerce.gov/ethics](http://www.commerce.gov/ethics);
  - to your supervisor if the disqualification requirement prevents you from working on an assigned task;
  - to a supervisor or ethics official if you receive a travel payment to attend a job interview from a prospective employer; or
  - to a supervisor and an ethics official if you are a procurement official for a contract of \$150,000 or more and have contacted or been contacted by a bidder on the contract (even if neither of you pursues employment discussions).

Ethics Law and Programs Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States  
Department of Commerce

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